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TENNESSEE COURT UPHOLDS LOCAL CHURCH AUTONOMY

In our December and January issues, reference was made to two court cases in Tennessee involving the right of the majority of a Baptist church to discontinue cooperation with the program of the Southern Baptist Convention and its kindred organizations. One, the Evansville case, has been before the Tennessee Supreme Court; the other, the Pikeville case, was tried last fall in Chancery Court of Bledsoe County.

Chancellor H. J. Garrett, on January 21, gave the decision in the Pikeville case. He upheld the right of the majority in the Pikeville Baptist Church to discontinue financial support of the Cooperative Program of the S. B. C. and of the associational missionary program.

The current controversy over the autonomy of the local church has been going on for some three and a half years. It began, of course, when the North Rocky Mount Missionary Baptist Church, in Rocky Mount, N. C., sought to withdraw cooperation from the S. B. C.

It must be admitted that thus far the forces opposing the complete autonomy of the local church have been winning in this controversy. But the forces for autonomy have yet achieved a certain measure of victory on several fronts. Three such victories may be listed:

(1) About two years ago the greater number of ministers of Mecklenburg Baptist Association, representing churches in the area of Charlotte, N. C., adopted a declaration repudiating the decision of the N. C. courts in the North Rocky Mount Church case. A few months later, practically the same declaration was adopted by ministers in the areas of Greensboro and High Point, in N. C. This was followed by significant action on the part of several associations in N. C., notably by Piedmont and Liberty Associations. Also, there was action by

certain other groups — such as a strong resolution adopted by ministers from four associations in South Carolina.

The action by the Mecklenburg group alone was strong enough to force the hand of the General Board of the N. C. Baptist State Convention, thus causing the board to remove from the "model constitution" which had been issued to N. C. churches the very objectionable provisions regarding property holding. And it was evidently due to the action taken by certain of the above-mentioned groups that resulted in the leadership of the N. C. State Convention coming out at the 1955 session of the state convention and at least making a pretense of doing something about re-establishing the autonomy of Baptist churches. (Although, as we have sought to point out before, what the 1955 session adopted can hardly be regarded as of any value in protecting the property of a church in the event of a future court case — for the very statement, word for word, which that convention adopted had actually already been used as evidence in the Rocky Mount trial and was there found

James M. Bulman,

Editor

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to be of no avail in protecting the property of that particular church!)

(2) The second significant gain was made last year at the S. B. C. in Kansas City, where, as expressed by the Associated Press, the forces for autonomy achieved a "half-victory."

(3) The latest significant action was the recent decision in Tennessee. In upholding the right of the majority to withdraw cooperation from the S. B. C., Chancellor Garrett said of the Rocky Mount case: "The facts of the North Carolina case were practically on all fours with the case before this court."

Indictment of Convention Policy

In his lengthy decision, Chancellor Garrett delivered a severe criticism against the policy which has come to be followed by certain Southern Baptist leaders. He stated:

"... Dr. Charles W. Pope, immediate past Executive Secretary of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, testified as an expert on church doctrine, usage, practice, and customs. He testified that the co-operative program was 'more than a doctrine,' that it was a plan and policy of the convention and that Baptist churches who did not voluntarily subscribe to or participate in it could not be identified as Southern Baptist. He conceded that any church could withdraw from the co-operative program and the conventions but that in doing so it could no longer be classed as a Southern Baptist Convention church. It was also his view that by their act of withdrawal they forfeited any right they had to the church property. The testimony in this respect REVEALED SOME BASIC INCONSISTENCIES in Southern Baptist precepts in

this regard. For example, it is conceded by all that a Baptist church is completely independent and autonomous, with full and unrestricted right of self-determination and is not subject to any other church or organization of any kind whatsoever but only to Christ and His authority. YET AT THE SAME TIME AND ALMOST IN THE SAME BREATH we have the statement from Dr. Pope that:

'All participating churches join the convention and association voluntarily and that WHEN THEY JOIN THEY HAVE TO SURRENDER SOME OF THEIR RIGHTS OF SELF-DETERMINATION because any group working together must work together as a whole. Hundreds of independent bodies (churches) cannot work together without each giving up some of its independence and autonomy.'

"It is not difficult to understand the logic of the foregoing views of Dr. Pope, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THIS COURT TO RECONCILE THIS VIEW WITH THE CONTENTION THAT THE LOCAL CHURCH IS COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT IN ALL PHASES OF ITS OPERATION. The local churches are either completely independent in every facet of their church life or they are not. According to this view, it is apparent that as far as Southern Baptist Convention churches are concerned COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE EXISTS LARGELY IN THEORY. Church pamphlets and periodicals pronounce it and uphold this principle in their articles BUT CONVENTION POLICY AND ACTION BE-LIE THEIR WORDS" (emphasis supplied).

Not Altogether Satisfactory

From the standpoint of Baptist principle, however, it must be recognized that the theoretical basis offered for this decision is not altogether satisfactory. Chancellor Garrett stated that he came to his conclusion by regarding the dispute within that congregation as being **not of a doctrinal nature** but rather as being merely concerned with what *procedure and methods of operation* were to be followed. The decision stated:

"In view of the court *no doctrinal differences* have arisen between the parties, *only procedural matters* . . ., it appears to this Court that affiliation with the various associations and conventions and contributions to the co-operative program are *purely matters of discipline and procedure* and must succumb to the majority will" (emphasis supplied).

BUT HAD THE DISPUTE BEEN OF A DOCTRINAL NATURE, could the majority have retained possession of the property? Chancellor Garrett's conclusion is that **"they could not."**

Now the decision acknowledges, "The trust impressed upon this church is very general; the *sole requirement* is that it be used for church purposes" (emphasis supplied). Furthermore, it is stated that in Section 10 of the church's Rules of Order, there is this requirement: "All questions except that of reception of members shall be decided by vote of the majority." Chancellor Garrett raises this question:

". . ., on matters other than procedures or discipline, namely *doctrine*, would a mere majority be controlling? In other words, under this 10th rule of order could a mere majority repudiate the declaration of church faith and covenant and desert or withdraw from an established doctrine of the church in which there had been close adherence and acquiescence for many years?" (emphasis supplied).

His answer is: **"It is the view of this Court that they could not."**

We believe that this position involves serious consequences. For example, following this position, it would seem that a church that had accepted the doctrine

of close communion could not, by majority vote, adopt open communion (or vice versa). As regards the matter of doctrine, therefore, this decision is open to the following criticism which Mr. William C. Lassiter has made of the Rocky Mount decision:

". . . it is . . . a serious restraint on religious liberty for the civil courts to establish a rule which will at least tend to stifle progress in religion and religious practices by creating a legal threat of the loss of the church property to any majority, however great, which in the exercise of religious liberty might like change."

Though — contrary to the understanding of some — Baptists in the past have certainly adopted creedal statements, it has not been the Baptist view to regard creedal statements as being so final as to preclude any possibility of their being changed. Thus the 1925 S. B. C., in issuing a statement of faith, prefaced those articles of faith with the declaration: "As in the past so in the future, Baptists should hold themselves free to revise their statements of faith as may seem to them wise and expedient at any time."

This question was discussed from a legal standpoint in two periodicals last year: the *Duke Bar Journal* and *The North Carolina Law Review*. The editor of the *Southern Baptist Free Press* has sought to set forth the essence of what was stated in this connection by those two periodicals in an article which has been submitted to the magazine of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the *Review and Expositor*. (Since this article is a defense of a previous article by this writer in the *Review and Expositor*, after the earlier article had later been attacked in that publication, it was felt by this writer that it was only proper to give that publication the opportunity of publishing this recent discussion of the subject. The article was submitted last October, and as yet the *Review and Expositor* has not said whether or not it will be published.)

What we feel is the inherent difficulty of Chancellor Garrett's position regarding doctrine can be seen in these words from his decision:

"Even if there had been doctrinal

differences involving different interpretations of the church covenant and articles of faith. IT IS BEYOND THE JURISDICTION OF THIS COURT TO DETERMINE WHO IS IN THE RIGHT" (emphasis supplied).

If, then the court could not settle a doctrinal dispute, *WHO COULD?* Would not the only proper tribunal for handling such an issue simply be the **local congregation?** Even following the theory that a majority should not be allowed to depart from a fundamental doctrinal position which the church had followed, *WHO* could determine what would constitute a "*fundamental*" doctrinal position? If it would not be within the jurisdiction of the court to determine this, then would not the decision be left up to the **local congregation?** The article above referred to from *The North Carolina Law Review* has concluded that the courts ordinarily have not attempted to handle doctrinal issues but have left such questions to be decided by the proper ecclesiastical tribunal, which for Baptists would simply be the **local congregation.** That article states:

"In most matters of church doctrine, the duly constituted tribunal will decide such questions. Civil courts will not ordinarily attempt to interfere with the decision of that tribunal, but will leave matters of doctrinal differences to be ironed out within the church. It is generally conceded that the 'tribunal' referred to in congregational or independent churches is the majority of the membership meeting in due course."

Thus the Nebraska court in 1899, faced with the question of whether there was any essential doctrinal difference between two groups within a Lutheran congregation, ruled that such "**was and is a question for the ecclesiastical tribunals** [in that case, the majority of the local congregation], **not the civil courts**" (as cited by the article in *The North Carolina Law Review*). As the Kentucky court pronounced in 1928:

"A Baptist church is a pure democracy, and in *all matters* relating to its government, election of its officers, its *articles of faith*, and the management of its affairs the local congregation pres-

ent and voting at a meeting regularly held, on any questions, determines the matter finally" (as cited by the article in the *Duke Bar Journal*, (emphasis supplied).

Indeed, Chancellor Garrett thus summarizes what has generally been recognized as proper legal principle regarding church disputes: ". . . the civil courts will not interfere unless property rights are affected, and **not even then if the basis of the schism is due merely to a disparate interpretation of DOCTRINE**" (emphasis supplied). What, then, becomes of the reasoning that, had the disagreement been over a *doctrinal* matter, the issue could not have been settled by majority vote of the congregation? Furthermore, it is difficult to see how the dispute within the Pikeville Church was basically anything other than doctrinal. On reviewing the record of the case, the decision states: "There is much testimony here that the co-operative program is doctrinal and there is also considerable testimony to the contrary." Thus with one side claiming that support of the cooperative program is a basic doctrinal principle and with the other side denying this claim, it should be evident that the dispute was concerned with a doctrinal matter of the most foundational kind: the dispute was concerned with the basic doctrinal question of determining what are the fundamental doctrines. And is it not evident that the decision of the court could have been arrived at only by entering the doctrinal realm — indeed, only by exploring to the very foundations and seeking to discover what are the fundamental doctrinal pillars of the church?

(The above references to the decision in the Pikeville case are taken from a copy of the judgment which was made available to this paper by the Rev. Howard Addleman, pastor of the Pikeville Church).

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THIS PAPER

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WHAT READERS ARE SAYING

From a TEXAS reader: "I am telling Baptists everywhere I go about your paper, how good it is and how fair you are with all concerned. I honestly believe it should be in every Baptist home."

From TENNESSEE: "I have just finished reading your article in the January issue on 'Preserving the Doctrinal Emphasis.' This article greatly moved me. It is clear and convincing! My heart deplores the double-mindedness of many of our denominational leaders. They are traitors to God in crucifying what they know to be the truth of local church autonomy. It is my earnest prayer that their error shall be repudiated both by them and by official action of our Convention. May God save us from the Catholic position that the end justifies the means . . . Please continue to present the TRUTH. But do not fall into the error of many by distorting the truth merely to substantiate your convictions. (This is the sin of those whose policies you are opposing!) Continue your high standard of love and fairness — 'speaking the truth in love' and your paper will be mightily used of God. I am a graduate of . . . [one of our Southern Baptist seminaries] and pastoring a church which cooperates with the Convention. Yet, if this trend to ecclesiastical hierarchy is not curbed in our Convention, conscience will some day force me out. I plan to be at Chicago and vote for your resolution. Remember: 'When we depend upon prayer, we get what God can do — and that is plenty!'"

A KENTUCKY reader writes of our February issue: "I feel sorry for Murrie. But, his chickens are coming home to roost. When Dr. Aldredge introduced his famous resolutions at the S. B. C. in Oklahoma City in 1949, and was successfully blocked by Dr. R. G. Lee, Murrie was one of the most bitter against these resolutions . . . But the treatment of Murrie is probably the most convincing thing that has happened, in my judgment, that these state editors have just about as much freedom as a gold fish."

From a NORTH CAROLINA Layman:

"In the February issue of *Southern Baptist Free Press* you quote from an article 'Free Voices for Free People,' written by Mr. W. Barry Garrett, editor of *Baptist Beacon*, the Arizona state Baptist paper. Mr. Garrett's article had been reprinted in the November 24 issue of the *Biblical Recorder*.

"I, too, read the article when it was published in the *Biblical Recorder*, but disagreed with Mr. Garrett's arguments and conclusions. Perhaps you will be interested in a letter which I wrote to Mr. Garrett at that time, stating my objections to his reasoning. I am attaching a copy of that letter for your information:

"Mr. W. Barry Garrett, Editor
The Baptist Beacon
Phoenix, Arizona
Dear Mr. Garrett:

"In the November 24 issue of the *Biblical Recorder* I read your article 'Free Voices for Free People.' This is an interesting article, well-written, and apparently giving expert opinion concerning the influence of Southern Baptist state papers.

"To some of us, however, your arguments seem weak and your conclusions entirely incorrect. If North and South Carolina are typical of other states in the Southern Baptist Convention, the weekly papers simply do not have the popularity and the influence you ascribe to them.

I. Number of Readers

"You state that surveys have indicated at least three and a half million people are 'reached' every week by the state papers. Who conducted the surveys which gave this information? More important, among what group of people were the surveys taken? Judging from 'surveys' made in North Carolina, more accurate figures concerning the number of readers and the number of persons influenced would be perhaps 10 percent of those given in your article — or 125,000 readers and 350,000 persons influenced.

"Perhaps your surveys were made among ministers, educational directors, and other employees of the churches and the denomination. Certainly these people would be expected to read the state papers. There would also be a goodly number of deacons, loyal church members, and interested people who would read the papers consistently. But beyond those two groups, there are few Baptists who read the papers or who even claim to know what the inside pages look like. This statement is based on the number of subscribers with whom I have talked — in North and South Carolina — and who are very frank to state that they never read the Baptist state papers.

"It cannot be denied that the large increase in circulation in recent years has been achieved only by persuading individual churches to put the state papers into the church budgets. This kind of increase is entirely different from getting an equal number of personal subscriptions. Even though the papers may have a circulation of 1,250,000 per week, by no means of reasoning can it be concluded that that many people actually read the papers.

"The church I am a part of has a membership of approximately 1600. The Biblical Recorder is not in the church budget. To our shame, we have only about 50 subscribers. These being voluntary subscribers, it would be thought that they, surely, are constant readers. Instead, except for the pastor and the church employees, it is almost impossible to find even one layman who can discuss any article appearing in the Biblical Recorder. On one occasion I asked more than twenty subscribers if they had read a particular article, only to receive a negative answer. Each person would make some remark about having subscribed to the Biblical Recorder for perhaps ten, or twenty, or even thirty years, but of never finding time to read it.

"This condition exists in all the churches in our city, as well as in churches in other communities. For South Carolina, I have found these conditions to exist in connection with the Baptist Courier. From statements made by people who have lived in other states, it is

evident that the situation exists all over Southern Baptist territory.

"According to the 'surveys' I have made, it is a myth to claim that Baptist state papers have a combined total of 1,250,000 readers.

II. 'As an Instrument of Information'

"In your article you state that 'a Baptist state paper is an instrument of information.' Immediately two questions arise. What kind of information? How complete is the information?

"In North Carolina we have had several controversies in recent years. One of particular interest was over the autonomy of the local Baptist Church. This, surely, is a subject about which complete information should be available to all Baptists. Many of us in North Carolina have earnestly desired to know more about the question, and we have searched the pages of the Biblical Recorder. But we have searched in vain for information about both sides of the question.

"Through the months there have been articles about one side — the side which the state leaders support. At the beginning of the debate there was some material from the opposite side. Afterwards, an apparent censorship was imposed; nothing more has been published about the side of the issue opposed by our state officers. Instead, those who had raised the questions and who were speaking for local autonomy have been referred to as 'trouble makers' and as 'disturbers of our unity.' How can one be a trouble maker when discussing the very foundation of our Baptist way of life?

"There has also been a controversy concerning Wake Forest College. Readers of the Biblical Recorder would hardly know the issue has been raised. If we depended solely on our state paper few of us could discuss the issue intelligently — for lack of information. At best, in discussing this controversy, the Biblical Recorder instructs us, as if we were children, to 'put our confidence in our leaders,' as if they were superior beings. Is it at all Baptist for 'our leaders' to decide such questions for the Baptist denomination in North Carolina?

III. Concerning 'Captive Editors'

"The comments in your article concerning 'captive editors' are unrealistic.

"No one will deny that the editors of our state papers are good men, capable, and dedicated to their work. But Baptist editors are only human.

"One of the editors is a friend of mine of long standing. Another was my professor, many years ago, in two courses at college, and I know of no man for whom I have a higher regard or a more lasting affection. But my personal feeling for both of these men does not prevent my disagreeing with them as editors.

"An editor of a Baptist state paper must, of necessity, agree with the state leaders. The very nature of his job demands that he publish articles favorable to those in office; or else, he would not be editor much longer.

IV. Conclusion

"In your article you are writing about conditions which evidently you wish were true. But in reality the conditions just do not exist."

From the Denominational Press

To give representation of the denominational press in this paper, we offer the following from the recent Feb. 7 publication of *Charity and Children*:

"Critics who make the false claim that Southern Baptists are afraid to disagree with the so-called 'powers-that-be' (whatever that term means) are not finding much ammunition for their publications in the current discussion about the location of a sixth seminary. No convention issue in recent years has brought about sharper differences of opinion.

"Editor W. C. Fields of Mississippi, after a trip to Chicago, came out bluntly for the Windy City as the best location.

"Kansas City has strong support, but Editor Lewis Myers of the 'Baptist New Mexican' doubts that two Baptist seminaries should be located so close to each other. [Central Seminary, controlled by the American Baptist Convention, is lo-

cated in Kansas City, Kansas] . . .

"As if the location problem were not enough, a number of leaders are questioning whether we even need a sixth seminary . . .

"Until more convincing reasons are given, 'Charity and Children' stands by Kansas City as the best location for the sixth seminary, if one is needed . . . despite our own feelings, we have confidence in the committee whose difficult job it is to recommend a site."

The Right to AFFILIATE

In contending for the autonomy of the local church, we have found it necessary to stress the right of a local church to *disaffiliate* with the S. B. C. This right, however, necessarily involves the right of a church to *affiliate* with a convention or association.

A brochure has been written by Dr. Luther C. Peak, entitled: "Why We Left Fundamentalism to Work with Southern Baptists". (By "fundamentalism" he means a Baptist movement that is unaffiliated with the S. B. C.) Dr. Peak relates that on May 29, 1955, his church voted to do 17 things, among which were the following: to cooperate with the Dallas Baptist Association, to carry on their missionary work through the Cooperative Program of the S. B. C., and to put the Baptist state paper of Texas into the church budget. Dr. Peak says that the vote was "practically unanimous" (emphasis supplied); which means, of course, that there was some dissenting minority. Although this action brought about a considerable change in the character of that church, must we not acknowledge that Dr. Peak is correct when he says of this majority action: "as a free and independent church . . . we exercised our liberty and our freedom to *change the channel of our cooperation*" from that of a certain group to that of the S. B. C.? But, in acknowledging that here the majority exercised its right in affiliating with Southern Baptist work, must we not acknowledge that the majority of the North Rocky Mount Baptist Church should have been given the right to *disaffiliate* with the S. B. C.?

Items In Brief . . .

The annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Press Association was held in Washington, D.C., the first week in February. The reporter from this paper who was present relates that Mr. Lewis A. Myers, editor of the New Mexico state paper, took the position in his talk before the state secretaries that there must be a "chain of authority" in our denomination for it to work. Myers also indicated that this authority must come down through the state secretaries. He advised the state secretaries not to "censure" an editor; he suggested, instead, that an editor be "retired" for "health reasons."

On Feb. 12, the Associated Press reported that a new appeal in the NORTH ROCKY MOUNT BAPTIST CHURCH case was filed with the N. C. Supreme Court. The high court is asked to reverse a decision of Judge Clifton L. Moore, who ruled in Nash County Superior Court last September against a motion for a new trial.

Just before going to press, this paper has received information that THE APPEAL HAS BEEN WITHDRAWN. Attorneys for those seeking the appeal stated that a recent decision of the N. C. Supreme Court, in regard to the matter of appealing from a decision of a lower court, was of such a nature as to make it advisable to withdraw the appeal.

Further development concerning the CHAPLAINS COMMISSION: The Executive Committee of the S. B. C. has authorized a committee of five "to study the matter of policies of the Chaplains Commission." Our information is to the effect that this committee is to meet in Nashville, Tenn., on April 3, and that this is to be an open meeting.

More N. C. church trouble: A heated dispute among members of the Old Bull Creek Baptist Church of Madison County (in Western N. C.) is headed for the civil courts. On Saturday night of Jan. 26 the pastor, the Rev. James C. Bu-

chanan "was knocked from the pulpit," and the Sunday School Supt. Mr. Vance Edwards reportedly was "choked." An Associated Press dispatch of Jan. 30 reports: "Buchanan said the Saturday night disturbance came after a long period of differences between two factions of the church over basic doctrinal issues. Among these he named distribution of Southern Baptist Convention literature and the Baptist Training Union program. He declared that *part of the congregation wants to pull out and form 'an independent Holiness church,' while he and the others want 'a Baptist church.'* However, a statement issued yesterday by seven members of the opposing faction said the question has come to be 'whether or not the MAJORITY of the congregation . . . is entitled to a voice in church affairs.' . . . Buchanan said that if the controversy enters civil litigation over the \$21,000 church property, **BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION OFFICIALS LIKELY WILL BE CALLED TO TAKE PART**" (emphasis supplied).

Still more N. C. church trouble: Dr. C. K. Rand resigned as pastor of Conrad Memorial Baptist Church, in High Point, in the evening worship service on Feb. 3, following a hectic morning service. According to the Greensboro Daily News, "A member of the congregation said the minister used a 'filibuster technique' at the 11 a.m. service today to keep a church business meeting from being called." According to *The High Point Enterprise*, Rand, asked by the press about the alleged "filibuster," said: "If reading the word of God is a filibuster, well—." He added that after the service began, a hymn was sung, prayer was said and announcements were made. Then, when members of the church attempted to raise questions of church business, Dr. Rand called them out of order. Regular business meeting time is Wednesday night, he said." Writing in the *Twin-City Sentinel*, Sid Bost reported: "Dr. Rand blamed the trouble on his activities as one of the leaders of a Baptist autonomy group which has been trying to discredit some of the leaders of the State Baptist Convention.

He said he resigned to 'keep from splitting my church wide open.' He said about half of the 370 members sided with him and the other half were opposed to his autonomy fight. Dr. Rand also said he instructed his wife, during the time the morning service was in turmoil, to 'call the sheriff because I feared physical violence would be done to me.' He said some of the deacons were 'raving, screaming and ranting' in their efforts to get the floor." . . . Now a group has withdrawn from the church and on Sunday night, Feb. 17, organized "The Peoples' Missionary Baptist Church." Among those withdrawing were several Sunday School teachers, including the Sunday School Supt., and four deacons, including the chairman of the Board of Deacons. Already the group has purchased some property and has called a pastor . . . The pastor is to be Dr. Rand.

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH BY C. K. RAND

What is the Roman Catholic attitude toward evangelical preachers and the evangelical message of salvation by faith alone?

In writing about Protestant radio preachers, Father Richard Ginder of the Catholic Information Society, New York, says: "The fact is that these people are strictly wildcat operators, without authority, equipped only with a glib tongue, a sharp wit, and a certain amount of charm."

He attacks the simple gospel of salvation by faith: "Salvation through a mere belief in the Lord Jesus is so simple that it makes us suspicious from the start. It's a little like the ads that invite us to learn the piano in four easy lessons. It's too simple to be true."

We of course believe that a person is saved simply by faith. Although it is a misrepresentation of our position to say that believing in Christ is merely an intellectual matter. True acceptance of Christ is brought about only in connection with a thorough change in one's nature; and, just as surely as the tree is known by its fruits, this change will issue in the performance of Christ-like deeds.

HOW DOES THE MACHINE OPERATE?

By C. K. Rand

(Editor's note: Dr. Rand is well qualified to discuss this subject, for his years of work with the Home Mission Board of the S. B. C. have given him an acquaintance with the inner workings of the denominational set-up. Because of his knowledge of denominational workings, he has been of tremendous help in the current autonomy controversy. As an example of the way in which he has "called his shots,"—at the S. B. C. in Kansas City last year he told us the night before the convention's resolutions committee reported what the committee could be expected to do about the autonomy resolution. His prediction proved to be almost as accurate as if he had been in the committee meeting himself!)

How powerful is our Baptist hierarchy? How does it operate? Whence comes its power?

The power lies in the element of *fear*. The thought of *unemployment* haunts the minds of those who would like to stand up and defy entrenched evil within the convention. Thus they are afraid; afraid in what we have boasted is the greatest democracy among Christian denominations!

How does the machine operate? Through the *STATE SECRETARY*. He controls the work within the state through the *General Board*. How does he control the General Board? By seeing to it that the "right men" are appointed to the Board; men whom he has helped to secure good pastorates; thus men that he knows will go along with his policies.

But how does the State Secretary place a man in the pastorate? Well, to what source does a church most often look in seeking information concerning a prospective pastor? Does the church not look to the *associational missionary*? The associational missionary's salary is usually paid—a considerable part at least—out of the cooperative program funds, and thus he will be expected to report to the State Secretary all that goes on in the association. Where could you find a better "spy"? When a church is looking for a pastor in that association, then the State Secretary, through the good offices of *his* associational missionary, can

usually place his man in the pulpit. And of course, **nobody is going to shoot Santa Claus.**

Also, when a brother becomes too inquisitive about the State Secretary's policies, it is a usual thing (if the brother has any "standing") for it to be arranged for the brother to get appointed to a place on a Southwide board. His sense of importance is now such that he will not take time to give a close look to the local situation.

This line of power, channeled through the state secretaries, is so strong that it reaches across our Southland: a brother who will not follow the party line in Mississippi would have a difficult time getting located in a church in California.

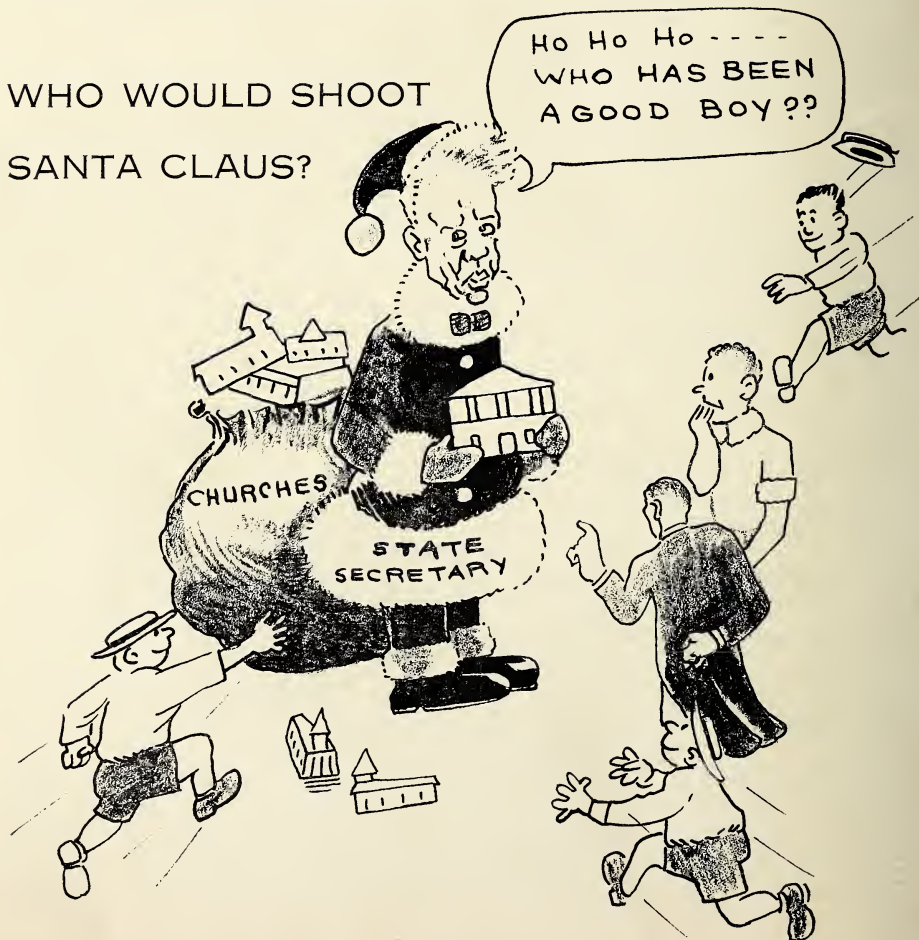
Now the Foreign Missions Board, the Home Board, and the Sunday School Board—in connection with the Executive

Committee of the S. B. C. and the state secretaries — all control the official sources of information that reach our Baptist people; and while in these official publications freedom is exalted on almost every page, still, to have anything written that is critical about the denominational set-up is practically an impossibility.

A Roman Catholic nun confined in a dark convent can appeal to the Pope for release from her vows, but Mr. Average Baptist Preacher has no court of appeal.

One of the worst features of the whole set-up is the way in which the dollar sign has been raised so high that the denominational leadership seems to feel that simply because a preacher has been placed in a financially secure position in the denominational system, then he should be expected to go along with the party line regardless of whether it should

WHO WOULD SHOOT SANTA CLAUS?



be right or wrong. As I heard Dr. R. Q. Leavell state in reference to any criticism of New Orleans Seminary, "Sharper than a serpent's tooth is an ungrateful child."

Incidentally, an understanding of the structure of the denominational set-up reveals the fallacy of the approach of countless graduates of Wake Forest College toward the controversy over the president of that institution. In spite of the fact that what seems to be the greater number of alumni are strongly in favour of removing Dr. Harold Tribble, he stays on as president. Why? Basically, because of the State Secretary, Dr. M. A. Huggins. Not until Dr. Huggins is removed from his key position will it be likely that the presidency of Wake Forest can be changed.

OUR WORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE "COMMITTEE FOR BAPTIST CHURCH AUTONOMY, INC." has brought us into connection with people from all walks of life—literally, with the doctor, lawyer, and Indian chief.

Last fall some of the Indians from the Cherokee area, having heard of the work of our committee, sought our help in regard to what they described as a most disagreeable situation that had been brought upon them by their connections with the Home Mission Board of the S. B. C. A number of conferences were held in connection with this matter and at length we were brought into contact with Chief Jarrett Blythe.

We were shown what we were told was a resolution which had been drawn up by the Cherokee Council on April 10, 1956 and had been sent to the Home Mission Board of the S. B. C., which is as follows:

**Resolution #56-54
1956 Special Session**

WHEREAS; it has been forcibly and painfully brought to the attention of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians that there are afoot certain moves by an unofficial tribal group or newly formed organization which if permitted to continue will tend to undermine the efforts and accomplishments of the duly elected governing body of the

Band, and said group is composed of members of the band with the backing of certain non-members who reside on the reservation as traders or *missionaries*, and

WHEREAS; such acts by any organization is a detriment to the whole tribe, and is not in keeping with tribal law and the Charter granted to the tribe by the State of North Carolina, and

WHEREAS; our long established form of tribal government has proven to be sufficient for our people, and is recognized by the state and nation as being purely democratic and keeping within the laws of the land, and

WHEREAS; we feel that it will be to the best interest of all concerned if non-members of the tribe stop meddling into our tribal politics and leave the future of our form of government and policies to the members concerned, and

WHEREAS; it becomes necessary to make an example in order to quiet the growing unrest among our people;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians in Special Session of Council Assembled, *"That the Home Board of the Southern Baptist (Convention) be requested to remove or transfer Rev. Ewell Payne from this field as soon as possible because it is our opinion that he is participating in Tribal Politics and other Tribal affairs."*

Be it further resolved, "that the Tribal Executive Committee send a letter along with a copy of this Resolution to the proper authorities of the Home Mission Board, *requesting immediate action.*"

And we were shown the following letter from Mr. COURTS REDFORD, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Home Mission Board of the S. B. C., to Chief Jarrett Blythe, dated May 21, 1956:

"Your letter of May 10th. came while I was out of the office. This accounts for my delay in answering.

"We certainly want to give consideration to the resolution which you sent and I shall call this matter to the attention of our Missions Committee when it meets the first of next month.

"I am sure the Missions Committee will want full information concerning the particular activities which lead to this action on the part of your council.

"We have always thought of the Cherokee Indians of North Carolina as being among our finest friends. In fact, there is a larger percentage of Baptists among the Cherokee Indians of that area than among any group of any nationality that I know. We have sought in every way possible to serve your people and to help provide for their worship and their welfare.

"Praying God's richest blessings on your people, . . ." (emphasis supplied)

When the Indians talked with us in the fall, however, they said that nothing had as yet been done about the situation, and they expressed very evident disappointment over what they regarded as unnecessary delay on the part of the Home Board. While wishing to be as impartial as possible under the circumstances, we felt that the matter should be brought to the attention of the Home Board. Whereupon, on October 6, 1956, the editor of this paper wrote to Mr. COURTS REDFORD as follows:

"A rather unusual request has been made to us by some of the Baptists from the Cherokee area of North Carolina. These persons, on their own initiative, have come to us with numerous complaints concerning the work of the Home Mission Board in that area, and they have asked that *we* look into this matter and try to do something about the situation.

"Please understand that we are not presuming as to any negligence or any inefficiency on the part of the Home Mission Board or on the part of its representatives. But since we as co-operating Baptists naturally have an interest in the work of the Home Mission Board in this state, and since we have been thus implored by several residents of that area, we feel that it is only proper to pass this information on to you—for the matter to be handled in whatever way in which you think best.

"It is our feeling that you would want to be thus informed of this request which has been made to us."

Mr. Redford's reply to this letter was on October 23, and is as follows:

"Your letter of October 6th. came while I was out of the office. This accounts for my delay in answering.

"I am somewhat surprised that complaints have reached you concerning the administration of our work at Cherokee. My surprise is not so much that some mistakes may have been made, but in that **WE HAD HEARD NOTHING** of them.

"**I DO NOT HAVE THE LEAST IDEA** of what complaints have been made or on what grounds they have been made. As far as I know the Home Mission Board has not interfered in any way with any of the churches among the Indians in North Carolina. At their request we have helped in the construction of a number of their buildings and have sought in every way we could to give them encouragement.

"The only church to which we have contributed anything is the Indian Church at Cherokee and it is now becoming self-supporting. We try to get all of our churches to be self-supporting.

"You will do me a great favor if you will let me know more about the complaints that have reached you so that we can make proper investigation.

"Praying God's richest blessings on you." (emphasis supplied)

However, we did not attempt to furnish the Home Board with further information. It was our feeling that if the very emphatic language of the resolution adopted by the Cherokee Indians was not sufficient to give the Home Board even "the least idea" that some complaints had been made—then there would hardly be any use in our saying anything else.

NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE WILL BE OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE . . .

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